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Dec. 11, 2006

TAMC Drug Testing Lab achieves milestone, tests more than 1 million urine specimens

Few people would know it when driving up the mountain to Tripler Medical Center, but they pass the Army's premiere drug testing lab. This past fiscal year, the TAMC Forensic Toxicology Drug Testing Center achieved a milestone by testing more than one million urine specimens. Slightly more than one percent of these were confirmed positive.



Jessie Boman, laboratory technician, Tripler Army Medical Center drug testing lab, prepares a service member's urine for analysis before sending it through the Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry (GC/MS) to test for the existence of unauthorized substances.

"Reaching this impressive milestone was only possible through the hard work and dedication of the drug lab staff," said Maj. Tom Martin (Ph.D), commander, Forensic Toxicology Drug Testing Center, TAMC. "The vast amount of specimens tested is more than any of the other five Department of Defense drug testing labs and a record high for the TAMC lab," he said.

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The mission of the drug testing lab is to provide forensic analysis of urine specimens to detect the presence of controlled substances and illegal drugs for military servicemembers.

"This lab is unique from the others in that it tests specimens from each of the services plus all specimens from the Army National Guard, Air Guard and Coast Guard," Martin said.

The lab is able to test for a large number of drugs of abuse.

According to Martin, all specimens are tested for the presence of marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines (to include D-amphetamine, D-methamphetamine and designer amphetamines like ecstasy) and heroin. They also test a percentage of specimens for the presence of oxycodone/oxymorphone which are semi-synthetic opiates prescribed for pain relief, PCP, LSD and opiates -- specifically, codeine and morphine.

Martin said the process for analyzing drugs of abuse not only needs to be done efficiently due to production demands but also accurately.

"Since the senior staff often provides expert witness testimony at military legal proceedings, there can be no margin for error," Martin said. "The Department of Defense can be assured that the Tripler Forensic Toxicology Drug Testing Laboratory is doing its utmost to uphold the highest standards to preserve a drug free military."

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